

Anne Meagher Northup

1948–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE
REPUBLICAN FROM KENTUCKY

1997–



Image courtesy of the Member

A LOUISVILLE NATIVE AND 10-YEAR VETERAN of the Kentucky state legislature, Anne Northup won election to the House of Representatives in 1996, the first woman in more than 60 years to represent her state in Congress. As a freshman, Representative Northup gained a seat on the influential Appropriations Committee. Her chief legislative pursuits have centered on education issues, adoption practices in China, and the procurement of federal dollars for transportation projects and community programs in her Louisville district.

Anne Meagher was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on January 22, 1948, one of 10 children raised by James and Floy Gates (Terstegge) Meagher. In 1966, she graduated from Sacred Heart Academy of Louisville and, four years later, earned a B.A. in economics from Saint Mary's College in Indiana. In 1969, she married Robert "Woody" Northup. The couple settled in Louisville and raised six children: David, Katherine, Joshua, Kevin, Erin, and Mark. Anne Northup worked as a teacher and for a major automobile manufacturer. By the early 1980s, she began volunteering for election campaigns, including Ronald Reagan's two runs for President. Northup's first campaign for elective office was in a 1987 special election for a seat in the Kentucky legislature, representing a Louisville–Frankfort district in the state house of representatives. She won and was re-elected to four additional terms, serving from 1987 to 1996. In the number two tobacco state in the nation, she remained an outspoken critic of the crop and introduced legislation to curb the powerful tobacco industry. Northup focused primarily on business and transportation improvements as a member of the appropriations and revenue committee and the education and economic development committee.¹

In 1996, Northup challenged one-term Democratic incumbent Mike Ward for his Louisville district seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. The district, which overlapped with portions of Northup's state legislature district, covered the larger Louisville and Jefferson County area, where registered Democrats

outnumbered Republicans by a two-to-one margin. Tobacco, health care, shipping, and tourism accounted for much of the district's economy. Northup narrowly defeated Ward—by about 1,300 votes out of more than 225,000 cast—even though President Bill Clinton carried the district in his re-election campaign. In her next three re-election bids, Northup won by slightly larger margins in her competitive district. In 2004, however, she earned a fifth consecutive term by the largest margin of her career, 60 to 38 percent.²

When Northup first claimed her seat in the 105th Congress (1997–1999), Republican leaders identified her as a rising star in a vulnerable district and accordingly assigned her a seat on the powerful House Appropriations Committee. Representative Northup also sits on three of the panel's subcommittees: Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education; Transportation and Treasury; and VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies.

Northup has used her influential position on the Appropriations Committee to pursue two primary legislative interests: national education reform and steering federal dollars into local government and community projects in her Louisville district. In March 1998, Northup founded the Congressional Reading Caucus to raise awareness of the increasing numbers of illiterate school children. She also authored legislation that created the National Reading Panel to evaluate the effectiveness of federally funded reading programs. In 2002, the findings of that study were incorporated into the federal education law, which set standards goals.

Congresswoman Northup's Appropriations assignment also has allowed her to bring federal dollars into her district to support infrastructure improvements and community organizations. During her first four years in the House, she reportedly brought nearly \$500 million into the district.³ She has procured money for two new bridges over the Ohio River, grants for local medical research facilities, and money for service programs in local churches.⁴ Northup, who has described herself as a fiscal conservative, is guided by a political philosophy that "supports policies that empower individuals and communities."⁵ The federal government, she once told the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, should "partner" with communities rather expending billions through federal agencies in Washington.⁶

As a mother of two adopted children, Northup has taken an interest in fostering adoption programs between the United States and China, seeking to reduce bureaucratic obstacles in the process. A social conservative who opposes all abortion procedures, she has been tapped by Republican leaders as a regular spokesperson because of her pragmatism and her ability to effectively communicate GOP policy positions.

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, "Anne Meagher Northup," <http://bioguide.congress.gov>

NOTES

- 1 "Anne M. Northup," Associated Press Candidate Biographies, 2004.
- 2 "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," <http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/index.html/>.
- 3 James Carroll, "Northup Balances Ties to District, Party," 30 October 2000, *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY): 1A.
- 4 *Politics in America*, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2003): 419.
- 5 "Official Biography of Anne M. Northup," <http://northup.house.gov/bio.asp> (accessed 20 February 2003).
- 6 Carroll, "Northup Balances Ties to District, Party."